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IRELAND

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Presented to Dear Lane
by the Author with
the best & warmest
feelings of his Emancipatory
Heart.

D. C. Colver

Received of the
Hon. Secy. of the
Treasury
the sum of \$100.00
for the purchase of
the land of the
Government.

Wm. H. Hunt

Received of Mr. J. L. Jones

the sum of \$100.00

for the purchase of land

in the County of ... State of ...

Witness my hand



I R E L A N D :

A P O E M .

BY

JOHN NEWLAND MAFFITT.

LOUISVILLE:

PRENTICE AND WEISSINGER.

1839.

954



TO

MY COUNTRYMEN,

THIS POEM

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.



INTRODUCTION.

There is a lovely island which is washed by the bright waves of the Atlantic. There is such a charm lingering around its classic ground that whoever has ever fixed his eyes upon its calm scenery, can never — never forget IRELAND. So great is the antiquity of its institutions, that when the ruin lay like a thunder cloud on the horizon of the Roman Empire, and the Goths and Vandals rolled their barbarian hordes over the Campania, and swept Italy with the besom of destruction, the sweet Emerald Isle was a refuge for the learned and virtuous of other countries. The terror of a falling nation never reached this sequestered and beautiful island; the shrieks of the victims were lost in the wild passes and glens of the Alps, save when the demon hordes, like an avalanche, broke from the eternal brow of the mountains, and shook the vallies of northern Europe. How pleasant here to recognize the beginnings of literary distinction — the ardent love of letters that has ever distinguished the Irish nation! These illustrious refugees scattered the seeds of literary inquiry, and became themselves incorporated with a people who were soon called to

meet the wave of Norman conquest, that had rolled over England and Scotland. The Danish yoke, once imposed on these spirit breathing men, sat heavily, and was indignantly thrown off in the deadly tug of war. Ireland then had her kings of noble deeds; she had her BRIAN, who, one thousand years after the birth of Christ, in the eighty-eighth year of his age, strewn Clontarf's bloody field with Danes, and poured out his life in the arms of victory. * * * *

Ireland's history is written in the brightest sunbeams that ever shot like quivering lances from the golden bow of the God of day. It is a rainbow, spanning two hemispheres and formed by the refraction of the rays of genius, in the tears of its sufferings. It is like a weeping willow on the banks of the Shannon dripping with the dews of sorrow, and glittering with the sunshine of mirth. No mountain-load of woe has been able to press the genius of our country in the dust. Her plaints of sorrow have so much music in them, that they ravish the earth—and cruelty drives home the rack with fiercer energy that the song may be more thrilling still, vibrating on the charmed senses like a plaintive wind note in all the luxury of music.

But what is Ireland that her sons can never forget her? She is a nucleus of jewels—a volcanic pyre of diamonds! Let convulsions rend her to the centre,

and the most dreadful volcanic spasms toss in whirling fragments the deepest substratum of her society, and you shall see ten thousand sparkling gems, thrown full and clear and dazzling in the keen eye of the sun; and as they fall in distant lands, they are torn yet glittering jewels still.

Her eloquence is an eternal protest against tyranny, and an eternal plea for liberty. Her laurels! where are they not? Moistened by Irish blood, they bloom on the world's every hard-fought field, from the invasion of Cæsar to the mound of Waterloo — from the crusades in Palestine to the defence of New Orleans — from the invasion of the Danes to Clontarf's bloody plain. Her sons are the denizens of the earth. Wherever freedom is, there too is their country, a copy in external form of what they would have Erin; but never can they find in the bright green earth, a copy of that mental image which beams like the blessed evening star, in every exile's bosom. Dear, illustrious country! In vain I look to find an age of savagism in thy primitive history. Yes! Full grown, mature, beautiful in majesty, and armed to the teeth, as Minerva when she leaped into being from the head of Jove, we find Ireland at Rome's proudest hour, the home of princes and sages and the altars of civilization; and when eighteen centuries ago, Christianity, after her baptism of blood on Calvary, went

out as a teacher to all nations, an apostle who had heard the blessed Savior, face to face, was seen in the green Isle of the ocean teaching a blessed immortality to the accomplished Milesian colony.

Look for a moment at the revolutionary history of America. The plains of Quebec are crimsoned with the blood of our own Montgomery. He fell in the sacred cause of American freedom, while Irish swords have been seen flashing in the sultry sun-bursts of India, mounting the breaches of Seringapatam, and at the foot of the Pyramids of the Nile. Shall we recall the name of Emmet? The image of the tall white obelisk, now pressing on his cold bosom, rises on the mind's eye, a vision of honor and renown gained in exile. But where shall we not look?

Away—away again over the dark blue Atlantic, we turn our eyes once more to that gem of the ocean, and contemplate for a moment the living energies of that peopled Isle. Roll mountains of power upon her and still she lives deep down beneath the avalanche. Dragoon her hills, and array the soldiery of the united kingdom upon her vales; yet still the whispers of freedom and the breathings for national liberty ride in the angry whirlwinds and sigh in the evening zephyr. Inurn her beneath the earth and write on the tablets of nations that she is no more, and you will see her immortal form still peering above the burial and laugh-

ing to scorn the inscription and the hand that wrote it. Cover her deeper yet, and still she lives. There is a flower of lovely beauty and rich fragrance; tread on that flower, crush it to the dust—it will bloom but the brighter; it will under the tread of oppression ravish the senses with its fragrance. Yet is she not a passive tamed sufferer. The roar of her threatening eloquence in the halls of St. Stephen often turns the Lion of England pale. Still and forever, she protests against the decapitation of her political head. Still and forever—let her protest—unless the strong yield the boon, and the cruel restore the prey.

Her poetry—the national poetry of Erin! how shall I describe it? It was said of one that her voice was tears. So are the songs of the Irish—but when tuned to lively feelings they are not tears; they are the dances of the heart; they are the gambols of the sweet affections; they quicken the blood; they deepen the flash of the eye; they crimson the cheek; they are wandering spirit-tones, the gushes of song that are borne by stray winds from the sounding ocean of immortal harmony. Bards of my country! I hail you across the glassy sea—and when the least touch of your thrilling stanzas beats on the tympanum of my soul, I am more than ever proud of my country.

Louisville, September, 1839.



IRELAND.

CANTO I.

“A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
Around me, and a dying glory smiles
O'er the far times.”

BYRON.

From Memory's magic realm, recalled, I see,
Erin, thy rich enchanting scenery!
Dear Isle of hearts! the loveliest and best
That slumbers, cradled on the ocean's breast!
All that is bright and beautiful and high,
Sublime or terrible in earth or sky;—
The gently sloping vale, the hoary hill,

The yawning dell, the cavern deep and still,
The soft winged airs that kiss the dewy eve,
The tempest's breath, the wild sea's billowy heave,
Sweet fruits that melt in fragrance on the gale,
The leaping waters in the pebbly vale,
Flowers of strange bloom, bewildering the eye,
The scented shrub, the war oak towering high,
Bright skies so silvery, beautiful and fair,
As if soft light from Eden wandered there,
Are all thine own, with every charm unrolled
That ever fringed Arcadia's green and gold!

Oh, had the risen star of freedom shone
On scenes like these, so beautiful — thine own —
How gladsome on the heart, like bursts of song,
Would memory roll thy storied years along!
How like an evergreen thy power had been
And Erin then had rivalled ocean's queen!
But Erin! thine own harp alone may tell,
How strong and deep the tyrant's long-drawn spell;
Toned like the moaning winds at close of day
In pensive murmurs as they die away,
No stranger hand may touch its golden wires,
No stranger heart the sorrowing theme inspires,

Thy children only may thy sorrows know
Who bend beneath the aggravated wo;
Others may speak of what they never felt,
And, touched by sympathy, may even melt,—
But none, save those who breathed thy balmy air,
Can feel the chain that binds thee to despair.

Earth's denizens! young freedom's cygnet home
Is yours—it matters not where'er you roam,
For, in your bosoms shrined, at home, abroad,
You worship Freedom second to your God:
But, wanderers still, you search the green earth o'er,
In vain, to find what you shall see no more—
That mental image which sweet Erin pressed,
In sad farewell, upon her exiles' breast:
Long may the melancholy smile, through tears,
That shone upon the dawn of earlier years,
Be present to your view till times gone by
Shall rush again before the startled eye,
Those times when Ireland was the muses' throne,
On which they sat—unrivalled and alone!

The airs of Erin! flowers of poetry!
Oh, they are sad, yet touched with mirthful glee,—

The dances of the heart, affection's flow,
Touchingly beautiful — now deep, now slow, —
Then light and merry as the winged feet
Of those whose pulses to wild music beat, —
Wandering spirit-tones by stray winds borne,
To soothe the pangs of feeling wrecked and torn,
Or trumpet-tongued, to cleave the vaulted sky,
And fill expanse with thundering melody.

And Erin's laurels! where are they? afar,
Where war and genius lighted glory's star;
In every hard-fought field, from Cæsar, down
To where Napoleon lost his iron crown;
In Palestine, in Italy — along
The shores renowned in glory or in song.

Illustrious land! the cradle of the free!
Though hard thy fortunes, dark thy destiny,
No savage era on thy history lies;
Letters and arts have ever cheered thy skies;
And science too, beneath thine olden wing,
Was cherished long by seer, and bard, and king,

And of Milesius proud tradition spoke
Ere Albion from her Druid durance broke,
Or haughty Rome her eagle flag unfurled
To gain the empire of a captive world.
'Twas then the sainted prophet came to thee,
Baptized in blood of him of Calvary,
Teaching the blessed precepts of the cross
Refined from earth and pure from sinful dross.

Still nurse thy living energies proud Isle!
And wreathe thy classic brow with glory's smile,—
For never from the burning scroll of fame
Shall dark oppression blot thy deathless name!
Though deep below the avalanche of wrong,
Hurled by a cruel arm in vengeance strong,
Thy pleasant vales have faded from the eye,
The joyless, dim abodes of misery,—
Yet rises, shrieking up to nature's God,
The voice of agony beneath the rod;
And He who summons nations to his bar
Shall roll along thy shores his judgment car,
And terror with his gory locks shall call
Thy plunderers to a fearful carnival.

Freedom is planted in the ancient graves,
It murmurs in the lonely mountain caves,
It rushes in the living seas that lash
The Giant's pillars in perpetual dash,
Tossing on high the banner sheets of green,
Such as of old in Clontarf's field were seen,
It whispers at the trysting hour of love,
While every star is witnessing above,
With vows of faith presentiments of fear,—
For, one day, may she not with anguish learn
Of a dark journey whence there's no return?
And he, the traveller, may the loved one be
To whom she pledges troth and destiny.
In vain, by the pale moonlight's quivering ray
May she explore the field of bloody fray;
Her tears cannot reanimate the dead,
Or rally back the patriot spirit fled.

The lion chivalry of Albion's throne
Sweep Erin's hills and call her vales their own,
But every echo carries back a hiss—
The curse of centuries reserved to this.
Inurn the victim! let her name of tears

Be blotted from the map of coming years,
Yet, from her tomb, a spectre shall unroll,
In accusation deep, a written scroll
Signed by the virtues, sealed with generous blood,
Poured out in torrents, like a mountain flood —
A stern appeal sent up in record dread
For entry with the Judge of quick and dead.

No dastard wailings from the crushed and lone
Have ever mingled in the Irish groan,
Sent up, perchance, like battle slogan more
Than moan e'er made by misery before ;
She wears the manacles, yet tosses high
The iron thongs full in creation's eye !

Ye who have seen her exile o'er the sea,
Say if he quailed before his destiny,
Or did not kindle into freedom's flame
At the low whisper of his country's name !
Has he not sworn on every holy hill
His vows to liberty eternal, still,
And, dying, left to tyrants all his hate,
Piled up in death before oppression's gate ?
There is a flower of beauty — crush its stem,

And tread its petals with their pearly gem
Still it will spring again in wonted bloom,
Filling the wilderness with rich perfume:—
So wounded Erin renovates from wrong,
Her harp of sorrow weeps into a song,
And, oh, my country! like the dying swan,
Pours sweeter tones when life is almost gone.

THE HARP SONG.

The bud and the blossom have fallen,
Keen bloweth the wintry blast,
And thou, too, art sere, Innisfallen!
Thy summer of glory hath passed,
And the winds are rudely beating
In tempests upon thy head,—
But spring shall come with its greeting
When the storm-clouds all have fled;
Green, then, be the gem of the ocean,
When hushed is this wintry commotion!

A moaning comes over the sea
And the exile of Erin is sad;
Though he dwell in the land of the free,

Yet not like the free is he glad,—
For there comes from the ivied halls,
Where the bones of his fathers repose,
The groan of the tottering walls,
Where once piles of power arose.
Green, green, be thy hills forever,
Though my eyes may see them never!

Like a dove from its nest away,
On its wearied wing upborne,
All wet with the wide sea's spray,
With its plumes by whirlwinds torn,
The lone exile of Erin would greet
The sight of the green ocean Isle,
A rest for his weary feet,
Where tears would be wreathed in a smile.
Green, green, be the gem of the sea,
Dear Isle, that I never may see!

CANTO II.

Deep back in time's far reaching night of years
The earlier dawn of Erin's fame appears;
Phœnicia's sons from Egypt sought the west,
Where day's proud monarch sinks to golden rest;
Their galley prows, along the Tyrrhene wave,
Hold on their course in gallant bearing brave,
'Till spectral Thule, Gibraltar's granite throne,
Bounded that earth which mortals called their own,
Then, gazing fearful, on Atlantis looked,
Whose awful wave, no master prow had brooked,
And inly shuddered at our ocean's song
Borne in low thunder-tones of dread along.

Far to the right they saw Iberia's hills,
Vine-covered, beautiful with silver rills,
The land, where Hercules, in olden time,
Had reared the pillars of his might sublime,—
And there they nursed their infant state awhile,
'Till better fortunes o'er their sky should smile.
Still and anon mysterious hints were rife
Of lands amid the ocean's ceaseless strife,

And rumor, thousand tongued, would ever say
That fields of golden fruitage westward lay,
Where tempered nature spread her arms unseen,
Blooming in pride, where man had never been.
What Ariel whisperer breath'd this thrilling tale,
And flung the promise on the western gale,
What sounds of beauty toned upon the surge
The ardor of adventurous men to urge,
We ne'er may know; the summons rang once more
Like prophet echoes, on that self same shore,
Ere he of Palos found a virgin world,
And on her mountains Spain's proud flag unfurled.

Again the triremes dance upon the sea,
Ploughing the waves of sullen destiny,
With awe advancing on that wasteful deep,
The boundary of earth — beyond whose sweep
Creation rested, like a giant tired
With labor that his earlier strength inspired;
But, strange to tell, as on and on they sail,
Nor sun, nor moon, nor stars their guidance fail,
The curling foam still whitened into spray
As when they left fair Egypt's seven mouth'd bay.

Nor long their onward course they patient held
'Till in the deep blue heavens, at morn beheld,
A line of mimic mountains painted hung
Gentle as waves from Neptune's chariot flung;
And fair as Cytheræa, the foam-born queen,
Fresh from the ocean, rounded hills were seen
With glorious streams and slumbering vales between.

Joy from a thousand sunny eyes shone out,
Joy thundered in a wild triumphant shout,
Joy beat in pulses, from the heart propelled,
Joy throbbed in bosoms that the snow excelled;
Joy—joy—a world in ocean's empire born,
Salutes the sun and kisses the fresh morn.
The hail, the cheerful cry, the loud command,
The friendly greetings to the new found land,
The tear that rushed unbidden to the eye
Swelled less by sorrow than by extacy,
The sweep of bending oars, the sudden shrieks
Of snow-white gulls, first startled from the creeks,
The laugh of maids, the jests of merry men,—
Were sounds and sights that like a dream appeared;
And that it was a dream they only feared;

For Nature, soft-eyed priestess, had arrayed
That beauteous Island as a bridal maid,
And now the hour approached in blushing pride
That made this Eden land Phœnicia's bride.

Far in the twilight of the years gone by
That unsketched scenery rises on my eye ;
I see the wild rose piled in festoons round
The native Shamrock of young Erin's ground ;
I see the woody hills that kiss the sky
Topped with the gorgeous cloud of shrubbery,
While every sense seems burdened and oppressed
With fragrant flowers inviting love and rest,
And, underneath, the carpeting of green
Shames loom-wrought fabrics of the Tyrian queen,
So soft and deep that beauty's foot of snow
Left angel tracks of loveliness below.

No monster ravened in these echoing groves
Where warbling birds were telling all their loves,
Nor serpent there his spiral volumes rolled,
Rich with his rage in burnished scales of gold, —
Nor savage man, a monster deadlier still,

Was there, to mar its beauty at his will,—
But o'er this scene the centuries had hung,
While here a human voice had never rung.

Oh, Nature! let me once, alone with thee,
Wrap my worn soul in thine own drapery—
No voices hear but thine Æolian tone,
And let me make thy olden halls my own,
For I am weary with the tongue of art,
I dread the flatterer's deceitful part,
I sigh amidst the throngs of earthly joy
Lest some dark demon should my peace destroy;
Give me another Erin, just as when
Its voiceful groves, first trodden by glad men,
Woke echo into language, babbling wild,
The shout of man—the pleadings of a child.

A sheltering nook now moors the galleys home,
Upon the shores a gallant party roam
Intent upon a dread religious rite
To melt all eyes and stir all hearts that night,—
For low upon the west the weary sun
Reclined his head as if his toil were done,
And shadows from the mountains stretched away

In sable mourning for departed day.
But, as the curtains of the night were drawn,
There flashed upon the eye another dawn,
Thrice twenty hill tops blazed with Baal-fire piles
And far around the fragrant desert smiles
Beneath the strange, wild flames that upward curled,
In splendor bursting on the new-born world;
Deep underneath the blazing eyes of night
Green foliage showed in beauty darkly bright,
While massive palls of blackness upward thrown
Put out the stars whose silvery glances shone
In beaming ranks on radiant night's blue zone.

Broad mountain flambeaux—roaring founts of flame!
From ancient rites your red-tongued volumes came,
When first on Askalon Baal's altars poured
The fiery symbols of the god adored
By those on Shinar's plains and those far hills
Where soft Idumea spicy myrrh distils;—
Thence borne by wanderers to the vale of Nile,
Thence to Iberia, thence to Erin's Isle.
The god of fire, with solemn chaunts of fear,
Was summoned from the blazing hill tops near,

To plant, on that green land, his molten throne,
And reign the moral sovereign all alone!

Deep silence hung upon the wilderness,
And dread, the child of gloom, with raven tress,
Glared voiceless from the arch of drooping boughs,
As panther whom the midnight hunters rouse;
Still and more void the unearthly silence grew
A spectral splendor on the weeping yew.
Old men from Palestine in terror said
The earth would tremble with the fire-god's tread,
And that no human eye could gaze upon
The steeds that urge his roaring chariot on;
They held their breath lest scathing thunders might
On heads irreverent and graceless light.

In that dread hush, below the mountain's flame
A strain of solemn, mellow music came,
Rising and falling like the billowy sea
In waves of wild and wizzard harmony,
And soon beneath the arching boughs were seen
The serried ranks with torch-lights thick between;
A long procession cleft the massive night;

First, maidens came arrayed in snowy white,—
Then bearded priests with awful symbols crowned
Such as Baal Peor in Idumea owned,—
Then stalwart soldiers with their scaly shields
That erst had gleamed in Scythia's iron fields;
The thunder-drums were hoarse as Oby's roar,
The trumpets shrieked and wailed along the shore,
And soft recorders melted into song
While stormy cymbals clashed in wrath along;
'Twas strange to listening night, that burst of sound,
Filling the air with tuneful echoes round.
Thus swept the wild procession on, as if
A fiery serpent rolled from Wicklow's cliff,
To Hawth's dread hill around the flashing bay,
Upon whose waves the torch-lights seemed to play.

But once again a solemn silence fell
On sea and hill and deeply shaded dell—
A silence like that pause in human life
When nature yields in death's insatiate strife;
The gouts of flame that flaunted into heaven
In silence rose, by night-winds stilly driven,
While round an aged oak the gathered throng,

Expectant, waited for the harper's song;
Then swept a form along the curtained gloom
That rather seemed the tenant of a tomb
Than one whose index on time's roll-call stood
This side eternity's returnless flood;
Tall, pale, and bowed beneath a century's weight,
The bard had come to celebrate the fete,
And touch that harp heard oft in Lebanon,
Stirring the cedars toned by Solomon.

Oh, 'twas an olden harp, this ancient man
Leaned o'er and gently tuned ere he began!
Wrought from the firs of Tyre its sounding frame,
The sea of death had drowned its maker's name;
But still the living principle of song
Dwelt in that wood in youthful vigor strong,
And the first touch woke music's wildest thrill,
As Erin's harp of power forever will.

THE BAAL-FIRE SONG.

Thou god of the flame
That burneth around,
I hallow thy name,
On this virgin ground:
From the Dead sea's wave,
And far Galilee,
Hastening to save,
Baal, hear me! Baal, hear me!

The beacon hill piles
Are flickering away,
While the black night smiles
With the fire-god's ray:
From Edom's mountains
Unwashed by the sea,
From the Nile's fountains,
Baal, hear me! Baal, hear me!

Here in this lone dell,
First pressed by the foot,
Thy praises now swell,

And the Baal-fires shoot :
From wilds that environ
 Storied Damascus
Tadmor and Gihon,
 Baal, hear us ! Baal, hear us !

Thy children wandering,
 Have come o'er the sea ;
When we're sorrowing
 Can we do without thee ?
From Babylon's walls,
 The jackall's dank home,
From its voiceless halls,
 Dread Baal, come ! dread Baal, come !

Lone pilgrims of time,
 We lodge here awhile,
From thy temple sublime,
 Oh, deign us a smile :
From the Siroc's wings,
 From Etna's red cave,
Where the lava springs,
 Fire-God, save ! Fire-God, save !

The dying harp had swept its farewell string;
'Twas o'er— with all its votive murmuring!
Then rose a shout as if the voice of seas
Sang thunder anthems to the frightened breeze,
And torches, borne by frantic hundreds, flamed
Through groves and thickets unexplored, unnamed;
A wilderness on fire could not have shone
Like these mad torches on the blackness thrown.
The Fire-God comes! the awful Fire-God comes!
Was cried by thousands midst the roll of drums;
The archers shot their arrows, swords were drawn,
And catapults hurled storms of iron on;
The cuirass rung, the shrieking trumpets wailed,
Till child and woman in their terror quailed,—
And still the roaring voices shouted loud
That Baal had come upon a burning cloud,
'Till, self-deceived, the wisest, sternest thought
They saw the demon whom the harp besought.

CANTO III.

'Twas morning. Day's red fingers gaily played,
With raven tresses which his bride displayed,
As, pillowed on his bosom, from his kiss,
She drank in beauty, and expired in bliss.

'Twas morning. From the soft and sunny sea
Came zephyrs on their wings of purity,
Which touched the cheeks of virgins still asleep,
And laughed to find the sentries in their keep,
Deep wrapped in slumber as they might have been
By ocean guarded, shut from danger in.

But one alone was wakeful on that morn;
A mighty chieftain in Phœnicia born,
Whose voice was law with hordes of fearless men,
Struggled with death, a mightier chieftain, then,
Sharp grew his iron face, his kingly eye
Wandered o'er fields of sightless vacancy, —
And that brave towering spirit knew full well,
A king must die and murmur his farewell.
He waked a sleeper; then a wailing rose,

From multitudes oppressed with heavy woes,
"Milesius dies! the shade of death comes o'er
A king, a father, we may see no more," —
Were sounds that shook the brooding wilderness,
The out-cry of a people's deep distress.

Still lofty in his dying spoke the chief
In hollow voice, with words of comfort brief,
Commanding silence while his spirit trod
The awful pathway to the Spirit God.
He called, and Heber, Ith, and Eremon,
His sons, approached with grief and sadness wan,
While to the heavens he spreads his dying hands
And leaves behind a father's last commands;
With solemn rites he makes each son a king
And gives to each an empire's signet ring,
Makes them the root of kingly power forever,
To hold their right in truth and mercy ever.
He made them raise his failing frame upright
Till he should gaze upon the orb of light;
Just then upon his wearied senses fell
A solemn vision and a poet's spell.

Far down the vale of years, he hoarsely cried,
I see the gloomy walls of Time divide;
Ten centuries shall the son of God reveal,
Then come the prophets of Jehovah's will—
At length the fire-god's worship shall decline,
And holier altars with new radiance shine.
I see the line of kings from me descended,
Stretch down two thousand years—then darkly
ended,—

When sudden o'er the nation's brow shall fall
The clouds of woe, fair Freedom's funeral pall;
I look beyond eight centuries of gloom
O'er Erin buried in oppression's tomb,
'Till at her feet the oppressors bow the knee
And ask forgiveness for old villainy.
What rushing brightness bathes my country's sky
Like seas of radiance rolling wild and high!
Nation of Kings! my soul is with you yet,
Though death now wrests from me my coronet.

Then sunk Milesius with the vision fired,
And overcome with blessedness, expired.
The wives and virgins kissed his pallid clay,

The priests came near the rites of death to pay,
The warriors gazed upon the giant form
That oft had guided in the battle's storm,
While from the grove in bitterness there came
The Ullaloo that reason scarce can tame.

Above the buried king a mound was raised
Where the perpetual fire for ages blazed,
'Till, in the womb of centuries forgot,
They lost the sacred and time-hallowed spot
Where strength and royalty were left to rot —
But as they piled the mound a chant was sung
Which through the ancient groves in sadness rung.

CHANT FOR THE DEAD.

Pile the mound — pile the mound!
Make it broad and high;
Deep, deep in holy ground
Ye bury royalty;
Ye hush a king to rest,
While heaps of fresh earth
Swelling high on his breast
Bear witness to his worth.

Pile the mound — pile the mound
On the great still heart,
While ye weep all around
That a king should depart !
And the shades of the dead,
Flitting by in gloom,
Shall smile above his bed,
And glory in his tomb.

Pile the mound — pile the mound !
All is silence dread,
And the battle's brave sound
Died away with the dead ;
But his ancestors' ghosts
From realms far away,
Gather near in pale hosts
Gazing pleased on this clay.

Pile the mound — pile the mound,
And then light the flame
Shedding radiance around
This mural throne of flame ;
And peaceful be the rest

Of king and of sire,
'Till at time's dread behest,
The years shall expire !

* * * * *

A broad hiatus in the lapse of time
Now intervenes in this historic rhyme —
A channel where the waves of empire ran
Through centuries of peace ; and then began
Those stormy times when Albion's bannered host,
First prowlers, sprang on Erin's Emerald coast.

But ere that day, two hundred kings had borne
The glittering crown Milesius once had worn,
And lofty domes of learning rose to heaven,
Whence mandates to the mind alone were given ;
And priest and prelate, curates of the soul,
Taught that the Lord of hosts, with high control,
Ruled in the earth, as in the starry sphere,
To virtue kind, to stubbornness severe ;
They spoke of dying love on Calvary,
And pointed sinners to the cross on high ;
Oft times they shrived the dying, bending o'er

The brow of beauty, beautiful no more;
Take with thy spirit, would the beadsman say,
To the far regions of eternal day,
The blessing borne on wing of love to thee,
From Christ, the fountain of soft sympathy;
While on the cross the Man of sorrows hung
No tender accents in his hearing rung,—
Yet there, in agony, his thoughts were kind,
As all thy sufferings passed before his mind,
And there he broke the barb of death for thee,
Poor dweller in the tents of misery!

Thus cheered, the wasted eye would light again,
The soul mount up superior to its pain,
And holy triumph crown a life of woe
With radiance richer than the sunset's glow.

Ah, dark that fated and accursed hour,
When Henry threw his myrmidons of power
On soil then sacred from a Vandal tread,
And turned its living green to deepest red.
The chivalry of England, taught to war
By those who crushed the son of Hamilcar,

Broke into phalanx by the Saxon stern,
Knew well the tide of victory to turn,
And bear down masses of untutored men,
Falling in death to rally ne'er again.

And well the wily foe knew how to nurse
Those petty discords, Ireland's deadliest curse,
And treason, planted deep, shot up in bloom,
'Till Erin's sons had surfeited the tomb,—
Slain suddenly by bigot's secret wound—
Beheaded nation—portionless—uncrowned!

The shriek of far antiquity was heard
When empire bid adieu—a farewell word—
To Munster's palace, hoary throne of time,
Where sat the giant kings in power sublime;
The thousand harps of history were hung
On willows where the moaning waters sung
The everlasting song of utter woe,
By night and day, in one unending flow.

And long the thick-ribbed gloom hath curtained o'er
That land so bright with genial flame before,

And oft the fruitless struggles made to break
The sleep from which the brave cannot awake.
Take one example from the weeping page,
How patriots dared the haughty tyrant's rage —
One picture hung in Tarah's mournful hall,
Of virtue's struggle and of freedom's fall, —
This will suffice to probe the fount of tears,
Gushing from Erin's eyes through sorrowing years!

CANTO IV.

The morning broke in splendor o'er that Isle
Where nature blooms in one perennial smile;
Sweet Erin! Emerald queen of ocean's wave,
Home of the warm, benevolent and brave —
Of one green vale upon thy sainted breast
I sing. How calm that morn was nature's rest,
As though no storms had ever ruffled by,
To mar the beauty of its scenery.
You might not on a finer picture look,
Diversified with hill, and vale and brook;
Oh, 'tis a fairy vale, all dotted o'er,
With story, breathing history's wildest lore!
The white-haired men of other days yet tell
What valiant spirits on its greensward fell,
A thousand reminiscencies are found
Like jewels, scattered on this ancient ground;
The trees are voiceful, every mound can make

Some tale of yore, while silver stream and lake
In gently flowing tender strains impart,
The requiem of sorrow to the heart.

Within that vale an aged abbey stood,
Surrounded by a thick, embowering wood,
Its lofty towers rose frowning, dark and grey,
Throwing long shadows on the noon of day;
The battlemented walls were ivied o'er
With foliage blooming as in days of yore,—
Like age and youth in wedded love embraced;
Such pensile outlines had the painter traced
About that desert pile, it well might seem
Like the soft drapery of a blissful dream,
From fancy's wizzard realm at midnight brought
By coursers rushing on the wings of thought.

Tomb-like the abbey stood, o'ergrown with moss
Surmounted by a rudely sculptured cross,
And here and there a graven image lay
Defaced upon the tessellated way,
Where once the lordly churchmen, crowned with state,
Displayed their power—now changed, but such is fate!

The tooth of years, the winter's scourge, the grave,
Man's guilty passions, time's devouring wave,
Have done the work of sullen vengeance there,
Changing a palace to a savage lair —
A relic hoar, and grim and solitary
Of the stern men that lived in years gone by.

The morning smiled upon its walls, as though
It were still merry in its courts below,
As in the palmy days of grandeur past,
Which rose too bright, too beautiful to last ;—
Or, when the royal troops, in one dark hour,
Flung the red blood upon its aged tower.
So still and calm the scene, it would not seem,
That discord, fire, and blood, and falchion-gleam,
Had e'er disturbed the quiet of its breast —
Sweet vale ! So placid now, and once so blest.

But anarchy had lit her torches there,
Men sternly stalked abroad with looks of care,
Whisperings of discontent were heard to rise
From cot and field : premonitory sighs
Of coming wrath ; rebellion's hydra head

At length was raised; and through the country spread
Like lightning's flame the tidings far and wide,
Rousing the nation's chivalry and pride;
In sudden impulse rose the patriot foe
Armed and prepared to strike the long-feared blow.

A shady grove, embosomed in that vale,
Spread its tall branches to the stirring gale;
Beneath its broad, umbrageous arms away,
Deep ravines yawned, unvisited by day;
While nature, near the Abbey, had arrayed
A bulwark of the mountain bases made,
Thrown sternly up to dare the face of pride,
While, to the left, there swept an angry tide;—
Apart from each, a greensward gaily spread,
Covered with daises to the river's bed.
A fairy queen might there have built her bowers,
So sweetly bursting with rich fruits and flowers;
Primroses fair, the hawthorn's crown of snow,
The wild rose with the honeysuckle's blow,
Twined into gorgeous wreaths, hung festooned round,
In union sweet, o'erarching all the ground.

And there the patriot chieftains held brief word,
Their thoughts with coming dangers, deeply stirred,—
For shadows of the future reaching back
Discovered gloom and doubt on glory's track;—
Long had they planned the enterprise that now
Kindled each heart, and flashed from brow to brow;
Goaded by tithes and hungry placemen's fees,
Tyrannic usages and cruelties,
They take the last resort of stern appeal
In arguments sent home by naked steel.

The summons to that gathering were given
At dawn of day, and ere the gloom of even,
A multitude had come—determined men,
From distant countries, mountain, hill and glen.

Oh, Erin! thy deep soil is red with blood
That calls for vengeance from the throne of God—
The blood of men thy godless rulers slew,
When, flushed with victory, they dared to do
The deeds of horror that have rent thy heart
And torn the bonds of union far apart.

What though thy empress sister lauds thee still,—
Yet art thou but the creature of her will;
Most royally, she chains thy children down
To deck her triumphs and support her crown.
No murmurs must escape thy lip, no thought
Go forth in search of freedom's happier lot;
Alas, for thee! yet heaven propitious hears
The captive's groans, and wipes away his tears;
Justice ere long shall rise, thy chains shall fall,
And thou shalt wear thine own green coronal.

There flamed that night upon the river's banks,
The signal fires, displaying armed ranks,
And groups of fierce and wildly rugged forms,
The nurselings of a thousand mountain storms,
Men of Herculean make, and eye of fire,
Son, brother, husband, and the aged sire;
Coarse their apparel, in hot haste put on,
Lest others first to fields of war had gone;
The scythe, and pickaxe, rusty gun and pike
To these rude peasants seemed in use alike;
But here and there were some who stood apart
In green and gold arrayed — and high in heart.

Amid the throng a haughty brow was known,
Young *****, who had scarce to manhood grown,
Last scion of a princely house of yore,
That ne'er shall furnish kings or princes more,
And long and dreary waves the yellow fern
O'er pomp and splendor never to return,—
With many others of as high a line
Burning with ardor in a cause divine,
A cause embalmed in freedom's holiest shrine.

Long years they bore the galling yoke unmoved,
In secret mourned the land they dearly loved,
But now the muttering thunders growled below
The mountains of a buried nation's woe,
As Etna, groaning in its frightful chasms,
Sways to and fro with rude internal spasms,
Then voices forth its huge, unearthly roar,
That startles heaven and bursts upon the shore,
While deep beneath the clefted rocks appear
The crimson torrents rolling high and clear,
The heart-blood of the mountain, spouting up
To overflow, in wrath, destruction's cup:
Thus these brave men first muttered, deep and dread,

The warnings of the sorely injured,
Then rolled a war-shout, like the roar of thunder,
Bursting the bonds of civic life asunder;
Then gleamed the steel, as the volcano's eye,
Drawn sternly now for death or victory.

Hark! from the hills a bugle-horn resounds —
A single horseman from the thicket bounds:
Soldiers! he cries, the foe is near — the foe
Is sweeping onward through the vale below;
Scarce distant twenty miles, they come! they come!
Sound to the gathering, trumpet, fife and drum!

Loud was the tumult — brief the orders given, —
While darker grew the blackening brow of heaven;
No breezes through the groves passed whispering by,
Nor breathed an echoing voice, nor heaved a sigh,
Through nature's realm a solemn stillness crept
As if the spirits of the air had slept.

The patriot army, gathered sternly now,
Hung breathless, gazing on their chieftain's brow,
To borrow confidence from that dark eye,

And glean the presage of a victory.
Hear now, said he, your country's clanking chains,
It is a tender mother's voice complains,
The iron in her soul hath entered deep,
Nor hath she left a single tear to weep;
Come on! the hour of trial dimly shines,
The inky heaven above in gloom combines,
To give an omen, in that fearful frown
Of storms of wrath that soon shall hurtle down.
United let us stand in life — in death
United yield to heaven our parting breath;
Our lifeless clay shall show the deathless hate
We bore to tyrants, as we bowed to fate;
But — strike! the wings of centuries draw near
To hide the work of vengeance and of fear;
Each groan you draw from tyranny's dark breast
Shall give some troubled patriot-spirit rest;
And glory's hills shall rally back the shout,
Sent up in triumph from the foeman's rout!

He paused — then broke upon his ear a roar
As many waters tumbling on the shore;
The captains on their pawing chargers sprang,

The spear and broadsword gave a hungry clang,
While the stern ranks in wrathful motion rolled
As tossing waves by angry winds controlled.

Obedient to command, the patriots moved
To save the shrines and gentle homes they loved;
They hurried o'er the gloomy hills afar
To meet — and break — the iron front of war.

The winds swept whistling through the deep brown
wood,
The beasts within their lair in terror stood,
The feathered songsters to their shelters clung,
As the storm trumpets through the welkin rung;
Upon the sky the cloudy banners waved,
While heaven and earth in maddening discord raved,
The lurid lightnings flashed, the thunders pealed,
And moss-grown oaks before the tempest reeled.
Old men who looked abroad that fearful night
Now inky black — now bathed in floods of light, —
Spoke solemnly of tyranny's dread doom,
Almighty freedom waking from her tomb;
The bursting of the thunder-clouds of heaven

They thought the signs of glorious victory given,
And, as their trembling arms on high they tossed,
They knelt in prayer for that devoted host.

Stealthily along the patriot army crept
Through the dim forest where the tempest swept
With strange forboding thoughts that came and went
Like meteors with prophetic darkness blent;
The craven-hearted and irresolute
Were now, amidst the tempest, cold and mute,
They feared the elemental shout of war,
And watched the brazen chariots from afar,
Lest the dark spirits of the air should be
Signs of defeat — and not of victory.

But in that thronging multitude were men,
Reckless of tyrants' curse or benison,
Whose bosoms swelled with mighty thirst to bring
The balm of freedom to the sorrowing;
No voicings from the elements had power
To stay their ardor in that trying hour,
With forms erect, their souls on fire, they pressed
To battle, — 'twas their country's high behest!

But ah! how few among that motley host
Could make such noble principles their boast!
Had but one heart and soul inspired the band
The light of hope had dawned upon the land,
Her bosom then, expanded, warm and free,
Had been the cherished home of liberty—
A diadem upon her head had been
Beautiful Erin! ocean's Emerald Queen.

Upon the summit of a lonely hill,
When muttering thunders ceased and winds were still,
A gentle murmur reached the listening ear,
And in that sound were words so fond and dear
You would not dream that tones as soft and sweet
Could on that solitary hill-top meet.
But, sheltered in a deep romantic wood,
Upon its brow a tiny cottage stood,
Beneath its humble roof there dwelt a maid,
In all the artlessness of truth arrayed—
The long-betrothed of *****—hapless boy!
Made his forever by the marriage joy—
Now clashing arms his new-born hopes destroy,
For scarce upon their bowing heads had come

The sacred rite, ere beat the troubled drum
That summoned ***** from his Eden bower
Where bloomed in loveliness his passion flower;—
Yet from his troop that night in haste he came
To whisper Mary's sweet enchanting name,
And with his greeting he had fondly given
The token hallowed by approving heaven.
But oh! the time is short—a bugle rings,
And closer to his side the fond one clings,
While sorrow, like a raven of the night,
Flapped its broad wings her rising joy to blight.
Storm had been on the mountains—but its winds
Were but the emblems of their tossing minds
Alternate swayed by hopes and boding fears,
Brief sunshine overcast with clouds and tears,
As, sobbing on the bosom of the chief,
She loosed the fountains of her sacred grief.

They part in tears—a lingering look—one more!
And all the world seems darker than before;
Farewell! that word in tones prophetic fell
Upon each heart, more like a funeral knell
Than parting benison, the fond adieu,
That promises return and pleasures new.

Sweet rose of beauty ! fair as summer's morn,
When crimson hues of light the skies adorn ;
Kind as the dew that falls on vine-clad hills,
When every flower its cup of nectar fills !
Pride of the vale — thine eye is downcast now,
A shadow flits across thy Parian brow,
Thy heart is with thy loving soldier gone
And in thy bower thou droop'st sad and wan,
But beautiful and sweet in loneliness,
As a pale star on evening's raven tress.

The pulse of war that beats in manhood's vein
In woman's blood is but a throb of pain ;
She hears in the loud clarion's cry aghast
The shriek of murder keen upon the blast ;
From scenes of strife in tears she turns away,
Yet soon returns the dying form to stay ; —
So Mary, thrilled with anguish, long had seen,
In dreams disturbed, the falchion's lightning sheen —
But, ah ! her gentle virtues had no power
To rule the tumult of the factious hour,
Or save from the dark rolling sea of blood
That swept o'er Erin with its boiling flood,

One dearer far than heaven's most blessed light
King of her heart — the crown of her delight!

Oh love! thy power is felt by serf and free,
This earth would be a desert but for thee;
The ruffled brow of care thy hand can smoothe,
And man's worst passions with thy sweetness soothe;
From thy soft galaxy all clouds depart,
Thou healer of the sad and sick at heart!
In thy glad eye a living radiance burns
As incense flashes in the fragrant urns;
But yet the seeds of life are sown in death,
So sorrow intertwines thy rosy wreath,
And those who love thee most, most deeply may
Lament the fate that rent the loved away.

Through morass deep, and glen, and broken land,
That night held on their course the patriot band,
Crushing the thorns and tangled shrubbery wild,
The dreary produce of a land despoiled;
But the harsh voice of brawling torrents spoke,
And on the ear of darkness rudely broke —
The trumpetings of nature meant to cheer

The hearts that struggled still with hope and fear,
While, overhead, the thunder rack still hung,
Still through the trees the storm-winds shrilly sung,
Still hid the stars their gentle eyes of flame,
Still the red lightnings, glaring, went and came,
And the fierce host oft blest the boon of heaven
For fearful torch-light in such blackness given.

Once more the dawn ! its penciled twilight played
On a far hill with England's power arrayed,
While on a plain, a turbid stream between,
The wearied sons of Erin might be seen,
With either wing obscured by fern and wood
As the firm centre in full prospect stood ;
The flag of green was dallying with the gale,
While trumpet answered trumpet — shout and hail
Came taunting in the winds across the water
With mingled shrieks of boding birds of slaughter.

CANTO V.

On Erin's sainted isle what hand shall dare
To rear the flag of freedom high in air—
Or light again on altar-stones the blaze
That shed deep lustre on her better days?
What master mind shall rend the chains apart
Whose iron links are chill upon her heart?
Who from the rampant lion shall reclaim
The fields still voiceful with high deeds of fame?
Not those whose vampyre appetites deplete
Their father-land, now prostrate at their feet,
The absentees from hearth, and hallowed shrines,
Dissolving Erin's pearls in Tuscan wines—
Base renegades who blush to own the soil
Which greedy tyranny has made their spoil—
Not they! the outcasts of insulted home,
Bearing the brand of Cain where'er they roam;
Grey, pampered minions, parasites abroad,

Alike abhorred by nature and its God —
Consumers of the bread the laborers need,
Who starve that gluttoned revelry may feed,
The thunder-bolt of wrath would scorn to crush
Such moral traitors in its fiery rush!
Live they — blood-suckers, bloated, overgrown,
'Till lazy infamy shall claim its own!
The blessed earth where serpents dare not spawn
Lends not a turf to pile their graves upon.

Alas! the efforts never can avail,
Put forth by trembling hands that can but fail;
Too strong have perfidy and fraud entwined
The galling bonds to loosen in the wind;
Divided counsels only feebly shake
And strengthen what they cannot break.
First plant the tree of union — let its root
Deep in the ancient soil of freedom shoot;
Let bigotry, abashed, awhile recede,
'Till arms are nerved to do a noble deed;
Let clanish feuds be buried on the shore
To rankle in the high of heart no more, —
Then — speak in thunder — Erin! of thy wrong,

Challenge the world, in mighty suffering strong,
Take suffrage of the centuries—summon Time,
To say if in his path of years sublime,
He e'er hath seen a sorrow like thine own
Borne with hushed breath—almost without a groan—
Call on the watchers in the midnight blue,
If, in the circle of their boundless view,
So dark a history of oppression frowned,
As sheds on Ireland's page a gloom profound!
Then, in a prayer of dread and last appeal,
Implore the Lord of Hosts to bless the steel,
Even if its edge the dark-souled tyrants feel!

Land of my sires! thy willows bending deep
Blend with the waters as they pensive sweep
To throw themselves on ocean's placid breast,
Lulled by the sea song as a babe at rest.
Land of my sires! the hungry tooth of years
Hath gnawed the channel for a flood of tears
Engraved upon the face of hill and plain
That one day shall be blotted out again.
Thy energies are chartered—drawn away
To swell the proud of England's court array,

To prop another throne, support a crown
That crushes all thy mighty genius down, —
To wake the wildest music far from home,
As, cheerless, thy unpensioned harpers roam,
Compelled by penury to touch the wires
In foreign courts, far from their own hearth-fires.

To stranger lands thy high-born sons have fled
To freedom bonded and to honor wed,
Their keen blades flashing through each battle smoke
Where bravery leagues against the tyrant's yoke —
Alas! that e'er thy recreant sons are found
Champions of wrong, upheld, on foreign ground,
By Irish talent with its bosom bare
The victory to win — or death to share!
Rouse — rouse thee glorious Isle! the eagle's eye
Not keener flashes through immensity,
Than thy red glance of wrath on perfidy:
Volcanic spasms have rent thy gems apart,
Yet still they glitter in each Irish heart, —
Ah, who would crouch beneath a tyrant's rod,
Forgetful of his birthright and his God?
Kissing the earth where titled Vandals tread

To earn by baseness his unhallowed bread?
Not he who ever felt his proud blood stir
At war-song of the gallant Troubadour,
Or felt the longings of his heart's unrest
To see his own his native country blest.
While one sweet spot of earth hath freedom there
Oh let me to its sacred fanes repair
And on its altars vow through life to be
The friend of man — of God — of liberty!

Morning was on the hills — the storm was o'er,
It died away as storms had died before,
A dusky glow was melting into light
And bathing gently every mountain height,
So beautiful! and then a flood of gold
Upon the vexed and feverish welkin rolled,
Braiding the tress of morn most radiantly,
Dotting the azure of her panoply.
Low whispering zephyrs stirred the sunny air,
Nature's green robe shone out surpassing fair,
Each element had sunk to peaceful rest,
Still, as an infant on its mother's breast, —
Yet the mild bosom of that morning held

A fiercer storm than ever madly yelled
From cloud to hill and back to cloud again,
The bellowings of nature's tortured pain.
There is no thunder in the realms of air
That may with the red cannon's voice compare,
Nor yet the cloud that hides the whirlwind's path
Such chilling gloom as shroud of battle hath,
Nor burns more lurid to the eye of fright
The lightning than the rocket's arching light,
Describing, o'er the sulphur hills of gloom,
A hopeless rainbow, planted in the tomb.

Most gorgeous war! thy flaunting banners play
So gently on the breeze that lulls away,
And thy brave music so enchants the ear
That one might think the seraph choirs were near;
But thy bright battle blades in hell were forged
By demon fire with hate and vengeance gorged,
In their blue sheen thy eye of murder sees
Depicted, wounds and dying agonies,
And death starts back appalled, when thy deep howl
Curdles the blood with terror's lion-growl.

Fiercer than nature's ruin, art thou, war!
When wades, through clouds of blood, thy baleful
star!

The earthquake giant, wrestling far below
The Andes' summits of eternal snow,—
The genius of the ocean, when he shakes
His storm-fed trident in the boiling lakes,—
The clouds, when ancient thunders wake from sleep,
And on the vapor mountains furious leap,—
The deep volcano, where the central fire
Spouts up through rifted chasms with wrathful ire—
The rushing whirlwind in its lightning sweep,
Waking the vallies from their placid sleep,—
Tornado, Simoom, scorching flame and flood,—
Thirst not for life, or limb, or human blood;
There is a mercy, too, that stays their course,
Calming the tumult in its giant force,
Smoothing the raging elements to rest
Imprinting peace on nature's ruffled breast.
There is a power above them smiling down
In silver sweetness through their darkest frown;
No voice dare say 'twas bitter hate that sped
The arrow to the bosom of the dead,

Or marred the beauty of a cot or field,
Or smiling landscape with the lightning peeled;
For, on the very cloud that gloomed above,
God hangs the rainbow of his ceaseless love,
And on the crest of ocean, buoyant rides
A spirit which shall calm its angriest tides,
The tempest rack destroys the seeds of death,
And fills the sunny air with rosy breath.

Thy throne is built of bones — all mildewed o'er —
That ne'er shall move in death's grim dances more —
Pale relics, bleached in wintry winds and showers,
Now piled on high like monumental towers,
Crowned with the halo of the battle flame,
At once man's glory, and his deepest shame:—
Thou art the Molock of the olden time,
God of the war-cry — horribly sublime —
Which stirs the thick blood in the sluggish veins,
And lures earth's millions to the ensanguined plains
To leave their headless trunks to fester there,
That heroes may the wreath of honor wear,
And maddened thousands laud the glorious day,
Which swept the brightest and the best away.

Oh, cursed war! Widows and mothers shed
Their choicest tears upon their midnight bed—
And orphans shriek at every victory,
Though drowned their cry in loud artillery.
Well may ye shout who live—the dead are still—
Cold sleepers on the scathed and bloody hill—
But every shout ye raise comes backs again,
From sorrowing homes, the cry of hopeless pain;
'Tis not in honor's gift to lend new life
To those who fell in battle's stormy strife,
Or soothe one pang in the bereaved heart
Still wedded to the dead—no more to part!

Hark! on the ear the noise of battle breaks,
And echo's shout in the dark ravine wakes;
The tread of thousands shakes the solid ground,
While light arms pour their rattling peals around—
Then—in the deep and solemn voice of fear,
The cannon thundered from the hill-tops near,
And the white smoke rolled like a seething sea
O'er the sad fields of death and misery;
Beneath its cloud the bloody war scythe swung,
And ranks of men the mowers rudely flung,

Like grass cut down in harvest — strown along
In furious haste by arms in vengeance strong —
But louder swelled the thunder — trumpets brayed
'Till the bold mountain chiefs were half afraid
That more than mortal voices shouted loud
In that wild atmosphere of battle cloud,
Which only parted as the flash of steel,
Or blaze of cannon made the stoutest reel;
Sounds of rough strife and pain were mingled there
Torturing the ear with shrieks of wan despair.

At length, beneath the cloud, the armies met,
Scythe crossed the sword, and pike the bayonet;
St. George's cross now met the banner green
Without a link of brotherhood between.
The drum was hushed — the cannon's thundering roar
Was still — the hoarse loud trumpets wailed no more,
While slaughter, foot to foot, and hand to hand,
Deluged with blood that green, that fated land.

How fared dear Erin in that bloody hour,
When her brave sons had dared the lion's power,
And shook the dew-drops from his shaggy mane,
That turned to blood and fell like dashing rain?

How fared poor Erin as her children bowed
“In prayer and battle” underneath that cloud?
My tears would tell, as fast and thick they flow
O’er Erin’s grandeur and her strength laid low.

The chivalry of England’s haughty crown
Like a cold Alpine avalanche came down,
Sweeping the patriot army on and on
’Till light from heaven’s broad firmament had gone --
O’er hill, through vale and thicket, bog and glen,
Pursuing still — nor pausing even when
The chill black midnight spread its vulture wing
O’er dreadful forms of death and suffering.

Towards the Emerald flag, now prostrate there,
A thousand hearts were lifted up in prayer;
But, ah, the curse entailed on Ireland threw
Across its green a shade of spectral hue —
A secret, dark misguiding had sustained
The torch of discord as the battle waned,
And what was bare defeat became a rout,
Disordered more by every triumph shout,
In rude hurrahs pealed on the coursing wind
Sent after those who dared not look behind.

That morn the Irish chiefs gave brief command
That all in close array should firmly stand,
Waiting the onset of the royal foe,
To give him gun for gun and blow for blow.
But all in vain, they rushed with frantic hate
On English spears, in masses separate,
Disorderly and wild, nor knew nor cared
How others battled or their comrades fared.
Oh wretched men! the bubble hope hath burst,
The better wished for hath become the worst;
On every tree there seems to swing a cord,
The brave man's horror and the rogue's reward.

But who can blame them! cannot ages crush
The free-born spirit in its eagle rush?
The fathers, ground for centuries in the dust,
Leave for their sons the scant paternal crust,
And galley slaves that pull the hopeless oar
Not harder toss the waves upon the shore
Than those inheritors of wrong, compelled,
Dig the worn soil their wretched fathers held.—
No dungeon prisoner in his damp deep cell
Can sorrows of a type more dreary tell.

The millions that just breathe upon the soil,
Worn out with penury and want and toil,
Bereft of hope, in rags sink down and die
Joyless and hopeless in their misery;
Their little all to heartless titheman given
Their wretched children by misfortune driven,
The footsteps of their murdered parents tread,
And o'er the land in shoals of rapine spread.

CANTO VI.

The light was fading in the crimson west,
Tipping with gold the hoary mountain's crest —
Long shadows fell on glade and hill and glen,
Soft silence reigned within the haunts of men,
The weary bird had folded up its wing,
The bee within its cell was slumbering,
The busy hum of day had sunk to rest,
And scarce a sound was on the valley's breast.

Beneath a shaggy rock, that shelved away
And formed a frightful cave, still lingered day.
Upon an uptorn oak that lay across
Its caverned mouth, amidst the tangled moss,
Pale ***** sat, a solitary man,
While from his wounds in streams of crimson ran
The idle blood, almost too faint to flow,
And stain the rill that murmured soft below.

With scorn his lip was curled, and in his eye,
There shot swift rays of fire in flashes by;
His features, sculptured into fierceness, seemed
As if he were in sleep, and inly dreamed
Of some dark tale, or sudden battle shock —
And now and then he gazed upon the rock
That hung above his head — then shuddering, sighed,
As if his very heart within him died;
And yet, across his noble forehead played
A light, as if some ray of hope essayed
To pierce the cloud that gathered darkly there,
The first dim shadow of his heart's despair;
But vainly was his expectation fired —
Light played a moment, and as soon expired.
Alas! his thoughts were thunder-bolts to him;
The fires of liberty were burning dim;
The loss of friends, of home, of kindred dear,
The woes of one sweet angel lingering near,
A jail — the fetters and tall gallows tree
Were links close woven in his destiny.

A cry upon his ear — and lo! his bride,
With long dishevelled hair, is at his side —

Her garments torn, her features wildly wan;
With bleeding heart she clasped the weary man;
Within each other's arms in that dark cell
They mingled words that none may know or tell.
With cheering kisses Mary chafed his brow
Which softened into thoughts of rapture now —
For woman in the trying hour is strong,
And firmer in her strength than man — each wrong
But nerves her weakness, fortifies her soul
To deeds of daring that may force control;
The moral power is hers to rise, not fall,
When ills oppress and life is full of gall;
In stormy battle ***** was a chief,
But now was woman's hour to give relief.

Saved from the jaws of battle, love, she said,
Nor numbered yet among the voiceless dead,
What care I for the withered wreath of fame
That curled to ashes in the battle flame?
What care I for the crowns now lost now won
By Greek or Roman, Frank or fiery Hun,
If, but my king, as now, I fondly press
To my lone bosom in a wilderness?

Let a just heaven but shield my love as late
In battle agony, what care for fate
Shall ever stir my heart to woman's fears,
Or break the seal upon my fount of tears?
Let but his love, Thou God of love, be mine,
Let me but like a wedded tendril twine
Around his manly form, unscathed as now,
And let me ever kiss his gentle brow, —
I ask no dower from fortune's golden store —
My husband safe — and mine — I seek no more!

Oh woman! truth and passion rear the throne
Where thou dost sit triumphant and alone;
Bright shapes of fitful fancies throw
Prismatic colors o'er thy beauty's glow —
Before a thousand shrines thy feelings burn
As vestals wave their tapers o'er the urn,
A seeming fickle nature oft imbues
The color of thy mind with rainbow hues, —
Yet when awakened to some daring deed,
When grief and trials come, or nations bleed,
When fields of blood re-echo shrieking cries,

And hope's lone star hath left the shrouded skies,—
'Tis then thy mighty heart shall fully prove,
The strength of all thy constancy and love.

Who longest lingers at the bed of death,
With kisses winning back the fleeting breath?
Who longest at the chill lone tomb shall stay
Pale sentinel o'er cold and paler clay?
“Last at the cross and earliest at the grave,”
Oh, woman! 'tis thy chosen hour to save
When manhood's haughty crest is fallen low,
Shattered and broken by the stunning blow!

Before the morning with its wings of light
Had brushed away the shadows of the night,
Young ***** with his trembling bride had fled,
And taken shelter with the sheeted dead
Inclosed within the abbey's eastern wing,
Remote, below the chapel slumbering.
Directed thither by a long tried friend,
They waited patient for the storm to spend.
A gloomy home was this for lovely bride
Whose beauteous form had been Avoca's pride,—

Yet hers was not a loveliness to fade
Within the sepulchre's unearthly shade;
'Twas hers to soothe with melting balmy phrase
The chieftain who had hoped for better days —
Calm as a child he drank her honied tone
Nor wished a monarch's happiness his own; —
But still the sigh would often heave his breast
That earth refused his bride a fitting rest,
And doomed her in the vaults of death to dwell,
Who would, in halls of pride, have figured well.

Ah, was there yet another unsped shaft
In fate's relentless quiver still to waft?
And must the grave's deep caverns, lone and chill,
Be subject to a bloody tyrant's will,
No longer the dull, echoless retreat
Where passion's maddening pulse forgot to beat?

Another pang — it was the last — drew near
To end at once their agonizing fear.
Sometimes they heard a whisper in the wind
That no armed bands their dread abode could find —
They hoped they might escape impending gloom

Within that long-forgotten ancient tomb;
But heaven itself were scarce secure from those
Whose bigot fury from proscription flows —
Blood tasters for the throne! a vampyre swarm
That fatten only on the life streams warm,
And glory more in shrieks and tortures wild
Than ever mother in her babbling child.

In hearts like these no pulse of mercy beats,
Or throb of sympathy its kindred greets;
Those sterile bosoms thrive with hateful weeds
That ranker grow as holy virtue bleeds;
And fury sweeps its sounding hurricane
Across such moral deserts—all in vain.
No crushed and bleeding floweret rises up
To fill with dew its siroc-blasted cup,
Along the path the scourge and spoiler trod
Imprinting vengeance on the shattered sod.

Such was the wolfish crew whose scent for blood
Was keen upon the river's whirling flood,
Where its dark waters leap, and, like a dream,
Show tower and buttress in the glassy stream —

Nor shall the abbey's consecrated vault
Be longer safe from furious assault;
They seek the living where the dead should lie
Shrouded in death's appalling mystery.

The midnight guards their watchful vigils kept,
And all was still, while groups of soldiers slept —
You could not hear a sound, save now and then,
The footfall of the weary, watching men.
As dawn approached, the rattling drum awoke
The frightened echo with each dubious stroke —
Then shouted madness — laugh and scathing scorn —
Fit prelude to the fearful work of morn —
Red flambeaux glared along those olden walls,
Searching the secrets of the storied halls,
Till not a nook was left, but that deep tomb,
Where love and Mary sanctified the gloom.

Down through the sounding corridors of death
Came sounds of warning borne on hurried breath,
And well they knew, the fondly faithful pair,
The vengeance howling in the upper air.
They bent in prayer before their Father's throne,

That sorrowing couple, with their God alone —
Their plighted vows again were murmured deep,
But neither sighed — they had no tears to weep —
The mighty love that stirred within each thought
Was now more kind and tender, softer wrought :
The Past was like a vision from the sky
Arrayed in beauty, but to fade and die —
The Present ! oh, what hand could fill the space,
What hues the picture, in that holy place !

No words were said, as from their knees they rose
And bared their bosoms to their cruel foes ;
One long embrace was given — the last on earth —
For, in that moment, shouts of savage mirth
Rang full upon their ear — the death hour comes
Drawing each sigh with furious rattling drums ;
The doors give way — the vault is filled with light
Where stand the fated pair confest to sight,
Pale as the sculptured marble, yet as calm
As those who wait the martyr's glorious palm.

The stunning crash of arms — the fatal shot
That wings destruction to the destined spot !

Young *****, with his bloody arm, had clasped
The angel of his love, who fondly gasped
Her last farewell upon his manly heart,
In death united, never more to part —
Then, spurning earth, where freedom was denied,
Their spirits rose, as morn's deep blushes dyed
The clouds, gilding her chariots rich with twisted
gold,
Which upward o'er the hills of glory rolled,
To bear the neophytes of bliss above,
Where swells the fountain of immortal love.









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